



The Christian Course finished with Joy.

25 A FUNERAL
SERMON,

Preach'd at DERBY, Oct. 14, 1740.

At the INTERMENT of
Mrs. Elizabeth Shaw,

WIFE of the REVEREND
Ferdinando Shaw, M. A.

Publish'd at his REQUEST.

By JOS. ROGERSON.

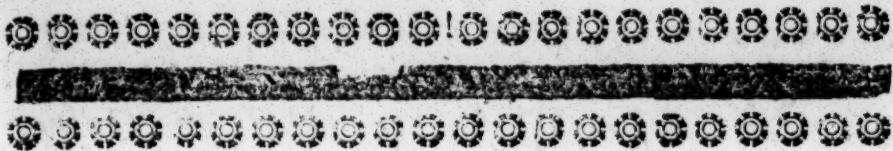
To which is added
A TRIBUTE of GRATITUDE
To the MEMORY of the
D E C E A S E D.

By her mournful RELICT F. S.

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A C T S xx. 24. Middle Clause.

— *So that I may finish my Course with Joy.—*



Y Text is a Part of that moving Speech with which St. Paul takes his Leave of the Elders of Ephesus. He addresses himself to them in a very pathetical Manner, and yet with that Assurance, which shews he was con-

scious to himself of his own Integrity, in the whole of his Conduct amongst them. He cou'd appeal to them as to the Temper of his Mind, and his whole Behaviour; his Condescension, his Humility, his Courage, his Patience, his Diligence and Faithfulness as their Instructor in the necessary Points of Christian Doctrine. After this he mentions the Prospects, he had before him as to future Sufferings. But this Foresight did not distress him, whilst he knew that he was executing the Office, and discharging the Trust committed to him, with the utmost Attention and Fidelity. *None of*

4 A Sermon on the Death of

these Things move me, neither count I my Life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my Course with Joy, and the Ministry, that I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the Grace of God.

In the whole, he speaks in Character as an Apostle of Christ, and an eminent, faithful, successful Preacher of his Gospel. But the Words, which I have pick'd out of this moving Speech of his, may be assum'd by the private Christian; the humble, attentive, faithful, tho' private Christian. The Man, the Woman of this Character has the same common governing Views with the greatest Apostle. They, as well as he, have nothing which they esteem of greater Importance and Concern, and by which they desire more carefully to direct their chief Intentions, than *the finishing their Course with Joy*. In such a Way I account for my Design in fastening upon these Words at present, as a Subject, by which I may very consistently improve the late Death, and the present Funeral of Mrs. S H A w; whom I take to be a proper Instance and Example of such excellent governing Views, having conducted herself by them, in every material Part of Life, with as much Steadiness, and as little Interruption, as most I have had the Pleasure to be acquainted with.

— *So that I may finish my Course with Joy.* —

In discoursing upon these Words I only propose

pose to illustrate and explain them: And then improve them for your Benefit, with a particular View to the mournful Occasion before us.

I. I propose to illustrate and explain the Words which I have read to you. Every one, that reads the New Testament carefully, will find the Sacred Writers describing the Nature, Design, and Engagements of the Christian Life, and the Reward which attends the faithful Discharge of the Duties of it by many significant Allusions to present Things. It is a Work, a Service, a Warfare, &c. It is often describ'd by Allusions to those Games or Exercises, which were well known amongst the Greeks; especially by St. Paul in his Epistles to the Gentile Christians. Amongst the other Games in which the Competitors strove for Victory, that of Racing was one, express'd in the Original by the Word $\Delta\epsilon\mu\circ$, which is render'd in our Translation *Course*. To finish the Course, is to execute or perform the Race within the prescribed Limits or Rules. When the Exercise was over, there was usually a Reward bestow'd on the Conqueror by the Judge, whose Office it was to determine to whom the Prize did belong, according to the stated Rules of the Game. This was a very active laborious Exercise, requiring the utmost Strength, and Ability of the whole Body. The Ground was usually mark'd out, and the Racers were to run within such Limits, and to such a Compass or Extent. Now the Christian Life is the Race

assign'd us. The Word of God fixes the Ground, and Limits. That is the Rule of Faith and Manners to us, from whence we must take our Measures for Life and Godliness. Great Diligence and Application, and the exerting of our best Powers is necessary for accomplishing this Race with Reputation and Success. There must be Constancy and Perseverance to the End. Death is the finishing this Course; we must be faithful unto Death, without fainting, growing weary or desisting. And when Conscience in the close of Life can bear its Testimony to our Diligence, and Sincerity, this is the surest Ground of Joy. In this Case the Reward and Crown is sure, which God the Righteous Judge will give. But without torturing the Metaphor, or hunting for a great Number of Particulars, in which the Engagements of the Christian Life may properly and significantly be compar'd to a Race, I'll proceed to illustrate my Subject a little farther under the following Particulars.

I. By placing the Work and Engagements of a Christian in an easy familiar Light, without keeping slavishly or strictly to the exercise here alluded to.

II. By shewing what is implied in discharging this Duty, and these Engagements aright, or finishing this Course well.

III. What Connexion there is betwixt doing so, and the Joy or Satisfaction here spoken of: Or shew, that, where this Course is finished

ished with Integrity and Perseverance, this is the surest Ground of Joy to the real Christian of any other.

1. I shall endeavour to place the Work and Engagements of a Christian in an easy familiar Light, without keeping slavishly or strictly to the Exercise here alluded to. I shall illustrate this in the following Manner. It is plain, we are the Creatures, the Subjects, the Servants of another, not our own Proprietors, not our own Masters. He that made us what we are, and gave us our Life and Breath and all Things, who has made us reasonable Creatures under a Law, and capable of proposing an End to ourselves, must have a Right to us, and Propriety in us, which no Man can gainsay, or set aside. *He* has set this Race, this Course before us, prescrib'd the Limits and the Length of it. *He* has assign'd us our Work, and Service in every Station, in every Relation of Life. *He*, who is the Sovereign Lord of all, and has a Right to prescribe to us, and all his Creatures, and to be obey'd, has done this. Our Rule, and Guide, in this Service committed to us, this Course assign'd us, are the Dictates of Reason and natural Light, the rising Events and Determinations of his Providence, and the plainer Declarations and Appointments of his Word: These mark out the Lines, prescribe the Limits by which we are to run. Our Obligation to Observance and Faithfulness is plain, and indisputable, and there is no room to hesitate about it one Moment.

And

And now what is that Duty, that Service, which he requires? What is the Race, the Course, which he has set before us? Any one, that views the Nature of Man attentively, must conclude, that he is form'd for a higher and more perfect Life, than he lives at present: That the great Author of his Being has not put him, whilst he is here, into the Possession of all that he intended him for: That the present Life is principally a State of Discipline and Trial, in which he is preparing for another: That an Eternity lies before him, into which he certainly passes, when he leaves this World; the Happiness of which, he cannot be fit for, nor enjoy without proper Dispositions, rais'd and cultivated by an Attention, and Conduct suitable to the Relations he stands in to God, and the World about him, and the plain Design of his own nobler Powers; and the Misery of which he must be expos'd to by a contrary Behaviour, a vicious and irregular Life. Consequently that his present Behaviour will have a most certain, and affecting Influence on his future Condition. If this be so, the chief Work he has to do, the Course assign'd him, is to get ready for that other World, to secure the Happiness, and avoid the Misery of it. This is the Service, he has upon his Hands, the Race set before him; and which ought to engage his deepest Attention and Regard; since he is now to act a Part in order to a future State, under proper Directions, the Enjoyment of suitable Means, and the best Encouragements

ragements to his Endeavours and Hopes. This Work, or this Race assign'd him comprehends in it a vast Variety of Particulars, making up the whole of practical Religion, the several necessary Parts, and Branches of the Christian Temper and Conduct. It is often represented in the Sacred Writings by general and significant Expressions, intended to include the whole Duty of Man. For this I might refer you to several known Places. The Royal Preacher describes it thus, (a) *Let us hear the Conclusion of the whole Matter, fear God, and keep his Commandments, for this is the Whole of Man; for God shall bring every Work into Judgment, with every secret Thing, whether it be Good, or whether it be Evil.* The Prophet Micah thus, (b) *He hath shewed thee, O Man, what is Good, and what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do justly, to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.* Our blessed Lord sums up the whole of Religion thus, (c) *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind: This is the first, and great Commandment: And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy Neighbour, as thyself; on these two hang all the Law and the Prophets.* Thus I say he represents the Whole of Religion; tho' at other Times he insists on Faith in himself as the great Mediator and Saviour, shewing that, (d) *if we believe not in him whom*

(a) Eccles. xii. 13, 14. (b) Mich. vi. 8. (c) Matt. xxii. 37, 38, 39, 40. (d) John viii. 24.

God has sent, we shall die in our Sins, (a) and we are condemned already. Sometimes the whole of Religion is describ'd by (b) Repentance towards God, and Faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ; by (c) fearing God, and working Righteousness; by (d) being upright before God, and walking in all the Ordinances and Commandments of the Lord blameless. And as comprehensively as any where in that known Place, by (e) denying all Ungodliness, and worldly Lusts, and living soberly, righteously and Godly in this present evil World. Sometimes more obscurely and figuratively, by Regeneration, or the New Birth, by a New Man, a New Creature, &c. But, it would be almost endless, to turn you to all the Passages of this Nature. Any one of these shou'd be so explain'd, as to take in the whole Compass of practical Religion, and include all the rest.

I now suppose myself treating with those, who can't be utter Strangers to all this. I presume, Sirs, that thro' your Situation in a Christian Country, and by the Advantages of a religious Education, you can't be entirely ignorant of the main Principles, and Duties of true Religion: That you firmly believe the Being of a God, the Certainty of his Providence, and Government of the World, and a future State of Recompence, which are the great Principles of Natural Religion, and pre-suppos'd

(a) John iii. 18. (b) Acts xx. 21. (c) Acts x. 35. (d) Luke i. 6. (e) Tit. ii. 11, 12.

to all Reveal'd. I suppose you, in some Measure, acquainted with the History of Man's Creation, and his Departure from God and his Duty, and the Consequences of it to him, and his Posterity: Not utter Strangers to that glorious Scheme, form'd for his Recovery and his Help; with the various Methods of Divine Providence, which were intended to make way for the Accomplishment of it, and which was in the Fulness of Time actually accomplish'd by a Redeemer, the Son of God, and the Saviour of Men; to whom all Power is given both in Heaven and in Earth, who has more fully reveal'd the Nature and Will of God to Men, settled the Terms of their Acceptance, even Faith, Repentance, and real Holiness; has set up a Kingdom of Truth, and Peace, and Virtue amongst them, and will come again in Glory to judge the World in Righteousness. These Things I suppose you sufficiently acquainted with. Now the Question is, (and the faithful Monitor in your own Breasts must tell you,) how far you have inform'd yourselves as to these important Points, and graft-ed a proper Conduct on such Knowledge, and Information; how far you have improv'd the Advantages and Helps afforded you, and complied with the Intention of all in a righteous, sober, and godly Life. For your Work will considerably differ, and the Race, you have to run, will vary, according as this has been the Case, or otherwise.

If, notwithstanding the Light, and Advan-
tages

tages you have enjoy'd, as Christians, and by Education, you have lived a vicious and irregular Life, continued in a Course of Sin against the plain Commands of God, and in Instances, where self Deceit cannot be suppos'd to take place; here you have run out of the Bounds assign'd you. Where this has been the Case, the Ground must be gone over again by a deep and unfeigned Repentance. But, you must observe, I speak not here of Sins of Ignorance or Infirmitie, to which the best are liable more or less, but of such Sins as are plain and notorious, against the express Letter of the Law, where no Doubt, or Dispute can lie; against the frequent Checks and Reproaches of your own Minds, &c. In such notorious Instances, you must break off your Sins by Repentance, and your Disobedience by returning to your God, without Exception or Reserve. And you must remember, that nothing is true Repentance short of an actual and thorough Amendment, and after Faithfulness. Having offended God, the righteous Governor of a rational World by such aggravated Transgressions, you must shew a suitable Sense of your past Sin and Folly, by a proportion'd Grief, and Shame, and self Condemnation; by a free and ingenuous Confession; by humbly deprecating the Divine Displeasure; and by most firm and peremptory Purposes and Resolutions of greater Circumspection and Faithfulness; which Purposes and Resolutions stand for little, or nothing, if they are not carried into actual, and

and speedy Execution. (*a*) *He only that confesseth, and forsaketh his Sins, shall find Mercy.* When Matters are brought thus far, you may hope (thro' a Mediator's Death and Sacrifice) for God's pardoning Mercy, and Acceptance: And to expect this in any other Way, or upon lower Terms is to mistake, or pervert the plain Design of the Gospel. Upon your after Perseverance and Fidelity, you may hope (*b*) *to receive the Forgiveness of Sins, and an Inheritance amongst them, that are sanctified by Faith that is in Christ Jesus; to be justified by Grace, and made Heirs according to the Hope of eternal Life; and shall find Mercy of the Lord in that Day.* This is the Case with respect to those, who thro' a vicious and irregular Life, have gone out of the Bounds, the Limits, assign'd them: They must retrieve every false Step by an unfeigned Repentance, and actual Amendment.

But there are others, who by the Light, which they have enjoy'd, and the Advantages of a Religious Education, have set out right in the Christian Course, and have run the Ways of God's Commandments without any remarkable or scandalous Deviation, without turning aside to Folly by any gross or presumptuous Offences: Who have honestly endeavour'd (*c*) *to walk in all the Ordinances, and Commandments of the Lord blameless.* (*d*) *And to exercise Consciences void of Offence both*

(*a*) Prov. xxviii. 13. (*b*) Acts xxvi. 18. (*c*) Luke i. 6.
(*d*) Acts xxiv. 16.

towards God and Men; have done so (I mean) after making Allowances for the Defects and Weaknesses, which the best are liable to, and which Allowances are actually made by the Gospel Covenant and Constitution. Here now the Duty of such, and of those fore-mention'd sincere Penitents, who have been reclaim'd from the Evil of their Ways is the same, and with respect to their after Progress, and Advancement in the Christian Course, goes on together. It supposes a sincere Dedication of themselves to the Service of God, and the Duties of their Station; and a faithful Adherence to that Duty against all Hindrances, and Discouragements; and a firm Perseverance therein to the last. This must extend to the whole Compass of Duty relating to God, their Neighbours, and themselves. But I have not Time to descend to Particulars. Only let me just hint, That with respect to God, the first, and best of Beings, to whom they owe every thing, with whom they have the most direct Concern, and to whom they are accountable, they should endeavour to grow in the Knowledge, Love, and Resemblance of him; live continually under a Sense of his Presence, and Observation; with a cheerful and unreserv'd Subjection to his Authority; and a proper Regard to the Methods of his Providence; directing their Views, and Actions to his Glory; and aiming at the Enjoyment of him as their highest Felicity. With respect to Men they should behave with Truth, Justice, Faithfulness, Beneficence in all the Offices of Humanity,

Humanity, and Charity, according to their Ability, and as proper Occasions present: Which Duty is sum'd up by our blessed Lord in those few comprehensive Words; (*a*) *Whatsoever ye would, that Men should do to you, do ye even so to them.* With respect to themselves, they should live in all the Instances of self Government: the proper Regulation of their Appetites and Passions; the temperate Enjoyment of the Satisfactions of Life, under the Conduct of Prudence and Religion; the faithful Improvement of their several Talents, according to their different Station, and various Trusts; a proper Care to divide themselves aright betwixt both Worlds, the present, and the future; with a fitting subordinate Attention to the Interests, and Affairs of the present Life, whilst the other has the Preference in their Esteem, and their first and chiefest Regards. This, or something like this, is the Work and Duty of a Christian, the Course assign'd him, the Race set before him; which I have endeavour'd to place in an easy familiar Light. It is but a short, and imperfect Sketch, which has been given.

I'll only add, that for the Discharge of all this proper Assurances should constantly be sought from above, from the Father of Mercies, and the God of all Grace, suited to those free and intelligent Powers which he has given us, and according to the Expectations he has encouraged us to form by the Gospel of his

(*a*) Mat. vii. 12.

Son. But we must not forget in the Close of this Account, that when we have done our all, we are but unprofitable Servants, and have done no more, than what was our Duty to do. We can add nothing to God, nor lay him under any Obligation; and yet our honest, tho' weak Endeavours, shall be accepted thro' a Mediator. God himself, an infinitely wise and good Being, has assign'd us this Course, and set this Race before us; and wou'd he do this to our utter Disappointment and Confusion? That can never be. If we run well and faithfully we shall obtain the Prize, not a corruptible, but an incorruptible Crown, which fadeth not away, reserv'd in Heaven for us; a Crown, which God the righteous Judge will give; which will make a rich Amends for all, and far exceed our Expectations, or our Wishes.

I am next to shew what is implied in discharging this Duty, or finishing this Course well. In this I have prevented myself already in ^{the} great Measure, and need add very little more. Finishing our Course supposes that we discharge the whole Service or Work assign'd us, go over the whole Ground mark'd out for us, and hold on to the End. There must be a faithful Regard to every Part of Duty, in one Instance, as well as another, filling up the several Capacities and Relations of Life, and improving the various Trusts committed to us, according to the Circumstances of our Condition, and our Power and Opportunities for Usefulness. No one Instance of necessary Duty

ty must be neglected, whether with respect to God, or our Fellow-Men, or ourselves ; nor any Part of our Course omitted : And in this we must continue to the End ; 'till Death lodge us in the World of Recompence.

3. Lastly, I am to shew what Connexion there is betwixt thus finishing, and that Joy or Satisfaction which is here spoken of: Or, that where this is done with Integrity and Perseverance, this is the surest Ground of Joy to the real Christian of any other. Now this Joy may flow from the Testimony of a well inform'd Conscience upon the good Man's Review of his past Life, conducted with Integrity and Faithfulness ; which must at the same Time lead his Thoughts on to the Hopes and Prospects of that glorious Recompence of Reward, which shall crown and perfect all in the other World.

1. The Joy here referr'd to may flow from the Testimony of a well informed Conscience, upon the good Man's Review of his past Life, conducted with Integrity and Faithfulness. And where this is the Case, where Conscience can witness to a Man's Sincerity, this is a sure Spring of inward Joy : For the purest and noblest Pleasures which rational Beings are capable of, spring from Virtue or Goodness ; the inward Reflection of having done what's right, and good, and reasonable, and becoming them. This is the main Ingredient in their present Happiness ; as self Condemnation and Remorse,

upon the Review of wicked Actions, is to Men of a different Character, the very Essence of their Misery. The former is attended with a Sense and Perswasion of the Approbation, Esteem, and favour of the supreme Being, a Being of perfect Rectitude, infinite Power, Wisdom, and Goodness; the latter with the Apprehension of his Wrath and Displeasure, which must produce the most unsupportable Anguish and Distress. What a mighty Difference! The Pleasures of Reflection in a reasonable Creature vastly exceed the Pleasures and Entertainments of Sense, and these Pleasures of Reflection, (as I have just hinted) the purest and most valuable of them, principally depend upon Virtue, and the consciousness of having done what's right, and good. And this is the Joy here referr'd to: When a good Man can look back upon his past Life, and comparing his general Temper, and Conduct with the great Rule of Life, and the Descriptions which are given of the Good or Upright Man in the Word of God, his Conscience can Witness for him, that in Simplicity and Godly Sincerity he has had his Conversation in the World. This is a solid substantial Joy. *A Joy*, which no Violence or ill Usage from Men, can rob him of; a Prop which they can never pluck from under him; a Spring which they can't stop up. *A Joy* which nothing from without, can very much interrupt. For the most violent Pain or languishing Sickness, the greatest Disappointments, and Distresses in Life are much more easily born, when a Man can

can turn inward, and find all calm, and easy there. *A Joy which a Man may entertain himself with whenever he pleases, and which he can never grow weary of. Who wou'd not wish to have it thus, and finish in such a Manner as this? So that I may finish my Course with Joy.*

This no doubt is the principal Sense of the Place. But then the good Man knows that his Duration, and his Interests here are as nothing in Comparison of the other World whether he is hastening. The Satisfactions, and Enjoyments of the present Life are short, and imperfect, and mixed with many Allays; and he looks for something much greater, and better in Reversion. Whilst he is therefore feasting upon the Pleasures which flow from the Review of a devout, useful, well spent Life here; he can't forbear carrying his Thoughts on to what he is to be, and enjoy in Consequence of such a Conduct hereafter. He can scarce separate the one from the other in his own Thoughts. And therefore the Joy here referr'd to may arise

2. From the Prospects and Hopes of that glorious Recompence of Reward, which shall crown and perfect all in the future World. This Recompence follows in some degree immediately, upon the good Man's finishing his Course. (*a*) *When he is absent from the Body he is present with the Lord,* (*b*) *enter'd in*

(*a*) 1 Cor. v, 8. (*b*) Mat. xxv. 21.

Part into his Lord's Joy. Image now to your own Minds, what the Satisfaction is to the Racer, that has reach'd the Goal, and won the Prize contended for: To the Soldier, that has won the Battle, and is rewarded, and crown'd after Victory: To the Merchant, who in a long Voyage has weather'd every Storm, escap'd many Enemies and Dangers, and is safely arrived in Port with all the Gains and Treasures of his Voyage. Any or all these wou'd be but faint Representations of that Joy, which the good Man enters into, when he has finished his present Course well. He is then set above all his Fears, and all his Dangers, above every Temptation and Snare; above every Instance, or Degree of Misery for ever. Not only so, but enter'd upon the Possession of every Satisfaction, which can render the Life of a reasonable immortal Creature compleatly and unchangeably happy. At the last, and finishing Scene, Christ's Second Appearance, and the general Resurrection, he shall be perfected in his whole Person, in Body and Mind, in all the Parts of the one, and Powers of the other. The Place, the Company, the Employment, and the endless and unchangeable Possession and Enjoyment of all will furnish out a Glory and Joy, which Eye has not seen, nor Ear heard, nor has it enter'd into the Heart of Man to conceive.

Give me leave to wind up all with a short Quotation from Mr. How's *Blessedness of the Righteous*, Speaking of Righteousness, or Holiness,

Holiness, or the Imitation of God, as the highest Excellency of a reasonable Creature, he thus expresses himself. " This is the Health, " and Soundness of the Soul; it exalts, refines, " and truly felicitates the Mind of Man. As " the Divine Excellencies being in their infinite Fulness in God are his own Blessedness; " so is the Likeness, the Participation of them " in the Soul, that now bears this Image, it's " Blessedness. The Man, whose Case this is, " doth not need to traverse the World to seek " his Happiness abroad, he hath the Matter " and Ground of his Satisfaction in his own " Breast, and Bosom. Sin is the vile make- " bait, that puts the Soul into Confusion; but " Holiness purifies, and restores, calms, and " satisfies. And this is not an empty fleeting " Shadow, but a substantial solid Joy at present. But what will it be when it comes to " be finish'd, and perfected above? Then it " will be Joy unspeakable and full of Glory " indeed! The Reason is before given: For " Virtue or real Holiness being the Image, " and Resemblance of that most excellent and " perfect Being, who is supremely amiable, " and unchangeably happy, inwardly to feel " this Likeness; to review and reflect on it, " must make us in our Degree Sharers in his " Blessedness, and lead us into his Joy. How " will the Reflection and Review delight and " satisfy!"

Thus have I illustrated and explain'd the Words. It remains only

2. That

2. That I improve them for your Benefit, with a particular View to the mournful Occasion before us.

From all this we may discern the Nature, Importance, and Consequences of the Christian Life. It is a Service, an Engagement, which requires great Attention, the exerting our best Powers, and a resolute Perseverance to the End. None of us can stand by as idle unconcern'd Spectators only. This Race is set before us, this Course assign'd us by a superior Authority, which we can't dispute or set aside. We are in this respect under his Direction, who is the Author of our Beings, the Preserver of our Lives, the Fountain of all Good to us, our rightful Lord, and our awful Judge. His Authority obliges antecedently to any personal Consent or particular Engagements of ours. His Claims commence at our first Entrance into Life, and immediately lay hold upon us, as soon as we are capable of exerting our rational Powers, or performing any actual Service. The more clearly we discern, the more carefully we consider this, the deeper Impression it will make upon our Minds, and the more cheerful and ready will be our Compliance.

There is no one Person in this numerous Auditory but has a direct Concern in all this. You'll permit me therefore, Sirs, to conclude the whole with a serious Address to you all according

according to your different Age, and Standing,
and Entrustments.

Those of you that are in the first Beginning
of Life, the Prime and Vigour of your Days,
who are just engaging as it were in this Christian
Race, this Course assign'd you, permit me
to suggest to you the following useful Hints.
Be sure to set out right, under the Influence
of proper Principles, Caution, and Resolutions.
Regard the Principles, with which you set
out, viz. A deep Sense of the Existence, Per-
fections and Providence of God; your direct
Concern with him, and accountableness to
him; an high Esteem and Reverence of him
in your Minds, and a governing Aim to please
him; with a high Value for the Christian Re-
velation, and honourable Thoughts of the
great Redeemer, and his glorious Undertak-
ing; with a Love to Truth, Righteousness,
Candour, Meekness, Benevolence; with a Love
to Virtue; a proper Regard to Reputation,
and Usefulness in Life; and governing Views
to a future and invisible World, which as young
as you are, you may not be at a great Distance
from, since daily Experience shews,, there are
Distempers and Accidents, which make no
Distinction betwixt Old and Young. You
wou'd find the Benefit and Force of such Prin-
ciples thro' the whole of the Christian Course.
When you have thus set out right, proceed
with the utmost Caution, and the firmest Re-
solutions and Purpose of Heart. There is the
more Reason for your doing so, considering
the

the many Difficulties, and Hindrances you must expect. In your first Entrance upon this Course you'll find yourselves surrounded with many Examples, and strong Temptations to Vice and Folly; there will be many strong Appetites and Passions to subdue; perhaps some great Mistakes and Prejudices, which have proceeded from a wrong Turn of Education, and which have grown up with you from your Infancy, to be corrected and removed. Afterwards you'll be in Danger of being diverted, and drawn aside by the Cares, or Gains, or Pleasures of Life, or by the Losses and Sufferings, which may arise from your Steadiness and Fidelity. Be attentive and always upon your Guard. Take in the best Assurances within your reach: In private, by Meditation, Prayer, and frequent Examination into your own State: By a serious and stated Improvement of the returning Opportunities for Publick Worship: By a constant application to the Duties of the Christian Life, thro' every Stage, and according to your different Circumstances; which Duties will grow more familiar and pleasant by daily Practice. Thus you'll get forward in your Christian Course, and advance in the Virtues of a Religious Life. Fortify your Minds with firm and peremptory Resolutions, least you should fall from your own Stedfastness. The Christian Scheme supplies you with the best Arguments, the most powerful Motives to all this; and is calculated to secure you in a patient Continuance in well doing. In short,

nothing

nothing is more necessary than an attentive and well resolved Mind.

Let those, that are more advanc'd in Life, and have made a considerable Progress in the Christian Course, be encourag'd to proceed from the Experience they have had of the Goodness of God, and the Pleasures of a religious Life already. You may still hope for the Divine Presence and all proper Assurances, as your Case requires, whilst you maintain a suitable Attention and Faithfulness. You should take Care that no Part of the Christian Course be intermitted, nor any of the necessary Duties of Life neglected. If you abandon yourselves to Sloth, or Carelessness, (*a*) *your last State will be worse than your first.* (*b*) *It wou'd have been better for you not to have known the Way of Truth and Righteousness, than after you have known it to turn away from the Holy Commandment.*

Let me in the last Place address myself to those, who are brought near to the Close of Life, and have almost finish'd their Course with Attention and Faithfulness; to those, who after proper Allowances for the Weakness and Defects, which attend the best, (*c*) *have the Testimony of their Consciences that in Simplicity and godly Sincerity they have had their Conversation in the World.* How happy a Situation this! Your greatest Labours and Difficulties

(*a*) Matt. xii. 41. (*b*) 2 Pet. ii. 21. (*c*) 2 Cor. i. 12.

26. *A Sermon on the Death of*

are over; you are going to reap the Fruit, and enjoy the Satisfaction of all. Be not weary or discourag'd, tho' bodily Infirmities grow upon you daily, and threaten a speedy Dissolution: You have just reach'd the Goal, and are laying hold on the Prize. Your chiefest Good is in near View, and you are entering upon the Happiness, which you have all along kept your Eye upon. The greater the Labours and Conflicts, you have endur'd; the greater Difficulties you have had to grapple with; the more extensive your Usefulness in Life; the greater Moment and Importance your Station and Trusts have been of; and the more steady and unexceptionable your Principles and Conduct; the more comfortable the Review, and the more entertaining and glorious the Prospects before you. Permit me to turn you to those Words of the Apostle, and finish my Address to you with them. (a) *And we desire every one of you do shew the same Diligence to the full Assurance of Hope unto the End; that ye be not slothful, but Followers of them, who thro' Faith and Patience inherit the Promises.*

More happy still is their Case, who have actually finish'd their Course with Joy; who having pass'd all Fears and Dangers; who being set above the Reach of every Temptation, and Snare, have arriv'd at their native Country and proper Home; *who now rest from their Labours; and are enter'd into their Lord's Joy.*

(a) Heb. vi. 11. 12.

How justly this may be concluded to be the Case of that worthy Person to whose Remains we are * now going to pay our last Respects, I may safely leave to every one, who had any Acquaintance with her, in the Judgment of Charity to determine. My own Mind wou'd not reproach me, it I shou'd dwell long upon her Character, in order to justify such a Conclusion. I have indeed all along in Funeral Discourses laid myself under Restraints in this Particular, and have thought it most prudent to do so. For in most Cases the less we say the better. But when Persons remarkable for many excellent Virtues, lovely and commendable in the Eyes of all Men, with very few known Allays, are remov'd out of our World, it is then, if ever, proper to bring their Excellencies more in View, in order to excite and encourage others by their Examples. I imagine a fair Occasion of this Nature now presents itself; but how fair soever the Occasion I design to be short, and determine that no Intimacy of Acquaintance, nor Ties of Friendship shall lead me to say any Thing, but what I know to be strictly true, and the mentioning of which may be for the Credit of Religion, as well as useful, and instructive to others.

Mrs. SHAW was a Gentlewoman born, being descended from the GELLS of *Hopton* in this County, by the Mother's Side. Her Father WILLIAM EYRE of *Holme*, Esq;

* The Corpse was carried into the Chapel, and stood there, whilst the Sermon was preach'd,

was a Person of great Worth, of uncommon Candour, Prudence and Moderation, as well as Learning, and good Sense, and eminently useful as a Magistrate in his Neighbourhood, which good Qualities with many others procur'd him almost universal Respect, and gave him a considerable Sway in this County. I shou'd reckon this scarce worth the mentioning, if she had degenerated from such Ancestors, or any way stain'd her Character by a Behaviour unworthy of such Descent.

She was a Person of unaffected Piety, and great Sincerity, join'd with much Sweetness of Temper, and uncommon Degrees of Discretion; remarkable for her Meekness, and Candour towards all, being always ready to put the best Construction on the Words and Actions of others, and to suggest the best Excuses, she cou'd think of for their Mistakes or Weaknesses: To all this was added a humble, modest Sense of herself, and great Condescension towards those below her. These were Virtues which render'd her amiable and much respected by all about her. And indeed she was universally esteem'd within the whole Circle of her Acquaintance; her Behaviour towards all being most kind, and obliging, most mild, and dispassionate, most free from Censoriousness, Envy, or Mistrust of others. In short, she had Nothing in her of the reserv'd and unsociable; but the Sweetness of her natural Temper was very much improv'd by those more generous and exalted Principles which

Christianity

Christianity inspires. Were I now to descend to many Particulars, I cou'd produce sufficient Vouchers for what, I might farther offer. Allow me to mention one, or two.

Her now destitute and sorrowful Consort is ready to bear Witness to her amiable Character as a Wife, having for upwards of Thirty-two Years experienc'd her most affectionate, prudent, submissive Behaviour in that Relation; her great Tenderness towards him under frequent Returns of violent Pains and long Confinement; her Readiness to contribute every Thing in her Power to his Assistance and Relief.

Those that liv'd with her as Servants know and will own her prudent, mild, compassionate Behaviour as a Mistress, her Readiness to pass by their Mistakes, and make the best of every Thing.

She was much respected as a Neighbour, and a Friend, adorning those Characters with an extensive Charity, great Discretion, Modesty, and Humility, with an easy, affable, obliging Behaviour, and a Desire to serve all to the best of her Power.

She knew how to estimate present worldly Enjoyments, maintaining a just and rational Indifference with respect to Dres, and Appearance, and the Gaieties, Pleasures, and Possessions of Life; and yet preserv'd a Decency becoming

becoming her Descent and Station. Her first Aim was to approve herself to her Maker and Judge, and secure her Interest in higher and better Things; pressing on towards the Perfection and Happiness of the future Life, as far as the common Weakness and Frailty of humane Nature would allow. Thus to distinguish and behave is one of the surest Proofs of Wisdom and Goodness, a constant and plain Indication of a large and generous Mind.

Her Behaviour under her last Illness was most exemplary for Patience and Resignation. She often express'd the Sense she had of that Divine Goodness, which had attended her thro' every Stage of Life, and her humble Dependence on it for what was yet behind. Upon the Review of such a pious, benevolent, reputable, well regulated Life the Thoughts of Death could not be uneasy to her, they were not at all so. Thus free from the Anxiety and Misgivings of Mind, which generally attend a consciousness of Guilt, *she finish'd her Course with Joy*; with great Tranquility and Composure, and with that fixed Hope, which the Apostle elegantly describes (*a*) as an *Anchor of the Soul pure and steadfast, and which entreth into that within the Vail.*

And now, my Friends, let us go, and do likewise. The View of a breathless Corpse now before your Eyes, and the Solemnity of a

(*a*) Heb. vi. 19.

Funeral have surely given you an awful Warning, and call'd you to serious Thoughts: The Nature, Importance, and Consequences of the Christian Life, have been honestly, tho' imperfectly describ'd for your Direction, and Encouragement. The Beauty of a virtuous Character has been faintly drawn for your Imitation: Let this engage us all to enter upon, and pursue the Course assign'd us with Attention, and firmness of Mind, with becoming Diligence, and by exerting our best Powers. Then, in the close of an useful, well spent Life, may we triumph in such Language as that, with which I shall conclude. (*a*) *I have fought a good Fight, I have finish'd my Course. I have kept the Faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness, which God the righteous Judge shall give me at that Day, and not to me only, but to all them also, that love his appearing. Amen.*



A
T R I B U T E
O F
G R A T I T U D E
To the MEMORY of
Mrs. S H A W.

By her mournful RELICT.

Nov. 11. 1740.

IT is probable that some Persons might expect a Funeral Discourse from the lamenting Relict of the Deceased, the last Lord's Day. But as I found myself too nearly concerned in this Affliction, to speak from the Pulpit on this melancholy Occasion, without too great an Emotion; I chose rather to desire my Reverend Colleague to publish his Sermon so suitable to the Occasion; and so useful for every Christian's Knowledge, and Practise; and with his Consent, briefly to subjoin, a Recommendation of the Deceased's amiable Character, as well worthy of every one's Imitation.

A Woman that feareth the Lord she shall be praised.—Her Husband also, and he praiseth her. *Prov. xxxi. 28, 30.* * The

* **T**HE Characters of some good Women of extraordinary Piety, who spent their Lives mostly in Devotion, and Rap-

* Many Persons into whose Hands this Sermon may fall, may be desirous to see the short Account of Mrs. SHAW and her Family, which was published in the *Derby Mercury*, two Days after her Interment, which is therefore inserted here, a little enlarr'd.

Derby, Oct. 16. On Saturday the 11th Instant, died after a lingering Illness of seven Weeks, Mrs. Elizabeth Shaw, Wife of the Rev. Ferd. Shaw, M. A. who has been Minister of the Congregation of Protestant Dissenters in this Town, upwards of Forty-two Years.

They lived together in constant conjugal Happiness upwards of Thirty-two Years.

She was one of the Daughters of that worthy Gentleman W. Eyre, of Holme, in the County of Derby, Esq; by Katherine his Wife, one of the Daughters of the second Sir John Gell of Hopton in the said County, Bart.

An intelligent Gentleman of their Neighbourhood, reading the above Paragraph, was pleased thus to express himself, ‘ I had the happiness of some Acquaintance with that worthy Family, the Deceased was a Branch of: And to which she was an additional Honour. — Her Parents were indeed amongst the Principal Ornaments this Country could ever boast of. The Integrity and Usefulness of her Father as a Magistrate: And the great and unaffected Piety of her Mother, was what rendered them truly such.’

It is somewhat remarkable that two of the Sons of this worthy Pair changed their Names from the Name of their Father. The second Son John Gell, Esq, died at his Seat in Derbyshire in 1738. The eldest Brother W. Archer, Esq; died at his Seat near London in 1739, when he was Knight of the Shire for Berks.

Their good Mother Mrs. Katherine Eyre, from the Marriage Day of this Daughter, chose to spend the remaining Years of her Widowhood in that Family, which she did with known Satisfaction; where Her Generosity, Hospitality, and Charity were felt by all around her.

The Excellent Spirit, Affable Disposition, Condescending Humility, Genteel Behaviour, and unlimited Christian Charity of the Deceased, most deservedly gained her the Respect of all who knew her. She was always ready to do Good to all, and to speak Evil of no one. And it is universally agreed by all her Acquaintance, that it may with as much Justice be said of her, as of any Person in the present Age, That she was Righteous before God, walking in all the Commandments, and Ordinances of the Lord blameless.

ture, must be designed sure to shew their *high Attainments*, rather than to recommend them as *Examples*, which are really *inimitable by most*: Nor indeed is it *so desirable for any*, to aim at an Imitation of *such*, as to be Followers of those Christians, who practise substantial and solid, discreet and unaffected *Piety* without much Noise and Shew; but which expresses itself in a constant and serious *Devotion*; and is accompanied with the Fruits of Goodness, Kindness, and Righteousness towards Men; *He that in these Things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God, and approved of Men.* (a) Herein the Deceased went before us in a distinguishing Manner, leaving us an *Example, to tread in her Steps*; who gave all Diligence to add to her *Faith, Virtue, Knowledge, Temperance, Patience, Godliness, Brotherly Kindness, and Charity*; (b) in a uniform, steady, calm, constant Observance of *whatsoever was virtuous, and praise worthy*; (c) and a patient Continuance in well doing, 'till she had finished her Course, in a well grounded hope of a joyful Enterance into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. (d)

She had the happy Art of *Self-Government*, the perfect Rule over her own Spirit: (e) and the true Secret of intermixing her Devotions to God, with the Management of her Family Af-

(a) Rom. xiv. 18. (b) 2 Pet. i. 5, 6, 7. (c) Phil. iv. 8.
(d) 2 Pet. i. 10, 11. (e) Prov. XVI. 32.

fairs, in every Relation wherein she stood: And also with ever doing that which was good, amongst all Persons, in so prudent a Manner, that the Performance of each had a proper Share in her daily Practice; esteeming them as essential Parts of the Christian Religion, never to be seperated from one another, never to be substituted one for another. (a)

She shone so bright with that Ornament of a meek and quiet Spirit, which is so amiable in the Sight of Men, and in the Sight of God of great Price, (b) as gained her the Admiration of all, who ever conversed with her; and exhibited a finish'd Pattern, worthy of every Christian Wife's Imitation. (c)

There can be no Suspition of Partiality in a Character, (tho' drawn by the nearest Relation,) which enters not into the Retirements of the Closet, nor the Privacies of the Family: But is taken from the Life, from the Tenor of the Behaviour, and the whole Conversation in the World, and was obvious to every Beholder.

There needs no Strains of Rhetorick, no Flights of Oratory, no artful Colourings to embellish the Picture of a Person whose own Works praise her: (d) And of whom all who

(a) Tit. ii. 11. Phil. iv. 8. (b) 1 Pet. iii. 1, — 7. (c) Prov. xxxi. 31. (d) Prov. xxxi. 31.

knew her will witness with one consenting Voice, *This Woman was full of good Works, and Alms Deeds which she did.* (a)

As censorious as the World is, and prone to Scandal, (from which perfect Innocence can't always escape) yet so inoffensive was her whole Behaviour, nay so ready was she ever to do good to all; (b) and to speak Evil of none, (c) (for certain it is that she would not deliberately give Offence to any either in Word or Deed,) that her prudent (d) Conduct met with this remarkable Return, that no one was known to be an *Enemy to her*, or so much as to speak an *Evil Word of her.* (e)

' The Loss of such a Person (says a worthy sympathizing Friend, who has been long of our Acquaintance) ' is to be lamented by all ' that have a Concern for the Interests of Virtue, and Piety, and Goodness; and her Death ' will be sincerely lamented by such, as far as ' her Character was known.

All the Properties of the Wisdom which is from above, as described by St. James were each of 'em united in her, in a conspicuous, and eminent Manner. And perhaps it may be said of Mrs. S H A W with as much Justice, as of any one Person who survives her, That she was

(a) Acts ix. 36. (b) 1 Thess. v. 15. (c) Tit. iii. 2. James iv. 11. (d) Prov. xix. 14. (e) 1 Pet. iii. 13.

first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be intreated, full of Mercy and good Fruits, without Partiality (or without Wrangling) and without Hypocrisy. (a)

To the Memory of this dear Saint, whose Death is precious in the Sight of the Lord, (b) is this Tribute of Gratitude due from her Mournful Relict. ‘ How deeply,’ (says my above condoling Friend,) ‘ must the Loss affect a ‘ Consort to whom her Worth was best known, ‘ for whom she had always such a tender and ‘ affectionate Regard, and to whom she was ‘ such a constant, prudent, and skilful Assistant under all his afflictive Trials, the Weight ‘ of which must by this be vastly increased.’

The Heart of her Husband safely trusted in her, (c) and He most thankfully records it, for a lasting Memorial of Her, that she did him Good, and not Evil all the Days of her Life. (d) And as he was with Grief lamenting her languishing Illness by her Bed, she declared to him; That she had nothing which troubled her Mind, either as to this World or the other: And that she trusted to her Husband for all the Comforts of this Life, and to her Heavenly Father for all the Happiness of the next.

This Tranquility of Mind, — This merciful Freedom from Fears and Temptations, —

(a) James iii. 17. (b) Psalm cxvi. 15. (c) Prov. xxxi. 11.
(d) Verse 12.

These comfortable Hopes in the Mercy of God, for the obtaining eternal Life, thro' Jesus Christ on the Terms of the Gospel, — And this affectionate Testimony (at the near Prospect of approaching Death) of the Fidelity, and Kindness of her Consort, which she experienc'd without Interruption throughout her conjugal State, — Together with an entire Reliance on his Tenderness and Care, to do *every Thing in his Power, or Procurement*, to render her Illness, and the Conclusion of her Days as easy, and comfortable as possible; — *These Things* will be remembered by *her solitary Relict*, all the few remaining Days of *his Life*:

Sometimes to the *Renewal of his Grief*, at every fresh Remembrance of the greatness of his Loss, in the Want of such an endeared, suitable, and every way desireable Companion; The constant Partner of his Bosom, in all his Cares, Afflictions, Joys, and Prayers; *who open'd her Mouth with Wisdom, and in her Tongue dwelt the Law of Kindness.* (a) — But at other Times the *piercing Grief* which is felt at the Removal of *his Crown* (b) of Happiness, which was his Glory, (c) the Joy and Comfort of *his Life*, for many Years; may possibly be *mitigated* by such Reflections, which may furnish the two most quieting Considerations that can be suggested (in this Case) for the Abatement of his Sorrow.

(a) Prov. xxxi. 26. (b) Chap. xii. 4. (c) 1 Cor. xi. 7.

That

That he sorrows not even as others who have no Hope. (a) But may rejoice in Hope, that having finish'd her Course, she is now entered into a better World, where there shall be no more Death. (b) — And is gone to receive a Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge will give her at that Day. (c)

And as in a short Time she will be follow'd to the same Grave, by her desolate Relict.* So God grant she may be followed in the same Christian Course of Faith and Patience, to the inheriting of the same Promises, (d) of the same everlasting Rest, (e) and Blessedness; (f) and so may we ever be together with the Lord. (g)
Amen.

F. S.

* With every Virtue was her Bosom warm,
And pure Religion brighten'd every Charm.
But say, lamented Shade, shoud I repine
That thou hast chang'd the Mortal for Divine.
More than I've lost in thee, to thee is giv'n:
I've lost a Consort — thou hast gain'd a Heav'n.

* In the same Parish Church where they were married, Aug. 4, 1708, he there caused a new Vault to be made Oct. 14, 1740; that they may sleep together in the same Sepulchre. (b)

(a) 1 Thess. iv. 13. (b) Rev. xxi. 4. (c) 2 Tim. iv. 8:
(d) Heb. vi. 12, 15. (e) Chap. iv. 9. (f) Rev. xiv. 13:
(g) 1 Thess. iv. 17. (b) Ruth 1. 17.



